

“How Can I Make My Home

If you're locked out of your home, can you still get in . . . through an unlocked window in the back, or by using an extra key hidden under a flowerpot or elevated on a ledge?

If you can break-in, so can a burglar! A small investment of time and money can make your home more secure and can reduce your chance of becoming a victim of burglary, assault or vandalism.

Get to know your neighbors. Watchful neighbors, who look out for you as well as themselves, are a front-line defense against crime. In almost half of all residential burglaries, thieves enter through an unlocked door or unlocked window.

Check the locks

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed deadbolt lock with a minimum 1½ -inch bolt.
- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available locks or with a broomstick or wooden dowel in the track to jam the door, in case someone tries to pry it open. Insert a pin in a hole drilled in the sliding door frame that goes through to the fixed frame

to prevent anyone from lifting the door off its track.

- Secure double-hung windows by using key locks or by sliding a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in top corners of the inside sash and partway through the outside sash. Secure basement windows too. The hole should be large enough that the nail or bolt slides in and out freely, in case you have to open the window fast in an emergency.
- Don't hide keys in mailboxes, planters or under doormats. Give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- If you've just moved into a new house or apartment, have the locks changed.

Check the doors

Locks aren't effective if they're on flimsy doors.

- Make sure all exterior doors are constructed of metal or solid, 1³/₄-inch hardwood.
- Doors should fit tightly in their frames, with hinge pins on the inside.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors, so you can see who is outside without opening the door.
- Door chains are not security devices—they break easily and won't keep an intruder out.

Check the outside

To discourage burglars from selecting your home as their target of opportunity, make sure to:

- Trim shrubbery that hides doors or windows. Cut tree limbs that could help a thief climb into windows.
- Turn on outside lights after dark to illuminate porches, entrances and yards—front and back. Consider timers that turn on outside lights or install motion detectors.
- Keep your yard well maintained. Store ladders and tools inside your locked garage, basement or

storage shed when you're not using them.

- Clearly display your house number, so police and other emergency vehicles can find your home quickly.
- Keep up the appearance of the neighborhood. Broken street lights, abandoned cars, vacant buildings, graffiti, litter and run-down areas attract crime. Work with the local government and your neighbors to organize community clean-up days.
- Put lights and a radio on timers to create the illusion that someone is at home when you are away. Leave shades, blinds and curtains in normal positions. Stop the mail and newspaper deliveries or ask a neighbor to take them in.
- Update your home inventory, listing removable items like VCRs, stereos, cameras and computers. Take photos or make videos of items, list descriptions and serial numbers. Check with law enforcement about Operation Identification—engraving your valuables. This can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file in the event that your home is burglarized.

What about alarms?

If you have valuables in your home, live in an isolated area or a neighborhood vulnerable to break-ins,

consider an alarm system.
Before you invest in alarms:

- Check with several companies and decide what level of security fits your needs.
- Sources of information include your local police/sheriff's department, the public library and the Better Business Bureau.
- Look for an established company and check its references before hiring it.
- Learn how to use your system properly.

If you continually trigger false alarms, your neighbors may come to ignore the noise. You could even be fined by local law enforcement agencies.

Burglars can take more than your property!

Burglars generally don't want to encounter their victims. But if they're surprised by someone coming home, or if they pick an occupied home, someone could get hurt.

- If you see a screen that has been cut, a broken window or a door that's been left open, don't go in. Call the police from a neighbor's house or a public phone.

- If you hear a noise that sounds like someone breaking-in or moving around, quietly call the police and wait calmly until they arrive. If you can leave safely, do so. Otherwise, lock yourself in a room, or, if the intruder enters the room you are in, pretend to be asleep.
- Think carefully before buying a firearm for protection. Guns can be stolen and sold to anyone, or captured and used against you or the police. If you already own a gun, keep it locked up, with the ammunition secured separately, and learn how to use it safely.

Look beyond locks and alarms

- Join, or help start, a Neighborhood Watch group. If one doesn't exist, ask your police or sheriff's department to help you start one.
- Look around for things that could contribute to crime—poor street lighting, abandoned cars, vacant lots, littered playgrounds with broken equipment and homes that elderly people have trouble maintaining. Help organize a neighborhood clean-up/fix-up day.
- Keep written records of all furniture, jewelry and electronic products. If possible, keep these

records in a safe-deposit box, fireproof safe or other secure place.

- Take pictures or a video, and keep purchase information and serial numbers if available. These help law enforcement agencies track recovered items.
- If your neighbors are ever victims, help them. Offer sympathy and support; help with meals, repairs or baby-sitting.

Burglary Prevention

The facts about burglary...

§ More than six million residential burglaries occur every year in this country. That's one every ten seconds!

§ Nearly half of these burglaries are committed without force — that is through UNLOCKED doors and windows!

Most of these burglaries could be prevented.

§ Always lock your doors and windows even when leaving for “just a minute.”

§ Never leave a house key available: under a doormat, in a flower pot, on the ledge of the door. These are the first places a burglar will look.

If you would like to make life even harder for crooks — remember the following tips:

§ Exterior doors should have “dead bolt” locks with a one-inch thick, strong metal bar extending into the door frame.

§ All sliding doors and windows should have “ventilation” locks, as well as auxiliary locks, to bolster security.

- § Be sure to include good locks for garage, cellar, patio or other doors that lead out through storage areas or a spare room.
- § For more information on locks, contact your local law enforcement agency.

Going Out?

- § Lock all doors and windows.
- § Use timers so that lights, radio and televisions go on and off throughout the house to indicate someone is home.
- § For longer trips, be sure to stop mail and newspaper delivery or have a neighbor collect them daily.
- § In short make your house look, "LIVED IN." Remember, if you come home and see a broken window or a jimmied door, don't enter the house.
- § Confronting a burglar can be dangerous. Instead, phone the police/sheriff's department immediately.

Other Tips

- § Install a wide-angle lens viewer in the front door. Never open the door without knowing who is there.
- § Consider alarm systems or trained security dogs for additional protection.

§ Whenever you move to a new home, have the locks changed.

§ Mark your valuables with an identifying number.

§ Put "Operation I.D." stickers in doors and windows to warn potential housebreakers to stay away.

§ Burglars don't want marked merchandise because it is difficult to sell and provides evidence of guilt if they ever are caught. Mark your items as conspicuously as possible without defacing them.

§ Photograph those items that cannot be engraved (jewelry, silverware and antiques).

§ Marking your valuables also facilitates the return of stolen property when it is recovered.

Don't let them knock your block off!

Want to know the best crime prevention tool of all? A GOOD NEIGHBOR!

§ Law enforcement officers can't be everywhere at once, but you and your neighbors can. You're the ones who really know what's going on in the neighborhood.

- § Put that neighborhood know-how to work. It's simple: Just use your eyes and ears — then your telephone. If you spot something suspicious, call the police or sheriff immediately.
- § Don't try to stop a criminal yourself —it can be dangerous.
- § Neighbors working together in cooperation with law enforcement make one of the best crime fighting teams around.
- § For more information on how to start your own **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP** — contact your local law enforcement agency.

